

Nomination for the Export-Import Bank Board of Directors

April 13, 1994

The President today announced his intention to nominate Julie Belaga as a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank of the United States.

"Julie Belaga's impressive range of public and private sector experience, particularly in the area of the environment, will be a valuable addition to the Export-Import Bank Board," said the President.

NOTE: A biography of the nominee was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Remarks on the American Helicopter Tragedy in Iraq and an Exchange With Reporters

April 14, 1994

The President. On behalf of the American people, I want to begin by expressing my deep sorrow at the tragedy this morning in Iraq and to extend my personal condolences to the families and the loved ones of all those who lost their lives.

Three years ago, our Armed Forces joined in a multinational mission to provide humanitarian relief to the oppressed Kurdish minority civilians in northern Iraq. Those who died today were a part of that mission of mercy. They served with courage and professionalism, and they lost their lives while trying to save the lives of others. The important work they were doing must, and will, continue.

According to initial reports, two American helicopters were mistakenly identified as Iraqi helicopters and shot down by United States aircraft. I have met with Secretary Perry this morning; I have talked with him and with General Shalikashvili, and I have instructed him to lead a full inquiry into the circumstances of this terrible incident. We will get the facts. And when we get the facts, we will make them available to the American people and to the people of Britain, France, and Turkey, our partners in Operation Provide Comfort.

Later today, Secretary Perry and General Shalikashvili will be providing further briefings to you as we know more and more facts.

The facts are still coming in, and we will give them to you just as soon as we have verified exactly what occurred.

At this moment, let me close by saying that we should join together in terrible sorrow and also in honoring the high purpose for which these individuals served and in which they lost their lives. The Nation and the world should remember them in gratitude.

Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, what's your preliminary assessment, though? What are you being told of how this could have happened? And is there any suggestion that the troops there are on too fine of a hair trigger?

The President. Well, all that will have to be, obviously, evaluated in light of the real facts here. There are at least three points of inquiry involving, first, the actions of the American jets; second, the AWACS and their actions; and third, the actions of the helicopters themselves. And again, I will tell you we will give you as much information as we can. I just am very reluctant to say anything until we're absolutely sure. I want you to have good information, and we will be doing continuous briefings and updates all day long as we know more.

Q. Do you know anything, Mr. President, about the numbers of people that might be involved and whether they were all American?

The President. We know that there were probably more than 20 people involved and that they were not all American. We do not believe they were all American; we believe there were some other people on the helicopters.

Q. And just to follow, you seem to be indicating—

The President. We do not have—let me say, as of the moment I walked out here, we do not have an absolute roster of the people on the helicopters. I would tell you if I knew. But we think there were approximately 12 total crewmembers, and we know there were some other people on the helicopters. And we know there were some other member countries in the operations. We do not know any more than that. When we know who was on there, we will tell you. As you know, we've dispatched an American team to the site to get all the facts.